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"Just like You" is the theme for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month 2009

Governor M. Michael Rounds has declared March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in South Dakota. South Dakota's Developmental Disabilities (DD) Network and other related organizations will be celebrating DD Awareness Month, and invite you to consider the true meaning of this year's theme, "Just like You".

Statewide, and across the nation, organizations devoted to serving people with developmental disabilities are planning events in March to raise awareness of the many abilities people have, regardless of disability. "Just like You" encourages people to bring diversity to their communities by welcoming people with disabilities into local neighborhoods, workplaces, houses of worship and schools.

"This is a time when our organizations focuses on encouraging the public to better understand people with developmental disabilities," said Arlene Poncelet, Executive Director of the South Dakota Council on Developmental Disabilities.

"During 'DD Awareness Month, "we encourage people to learn more about the people in their communities who have developmental disabilities. For example, when you see a child who uses a wheelchair – see the child, not the disability. And when you see a man with a cognitive disability working at your local supermarket, see the man, not his disability," stated Robert J. Kean, Executive Director for South Dakota Advocacy Services.

Judy Struck, Director of the Center for Disabilities, noted, "During March, Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, get acquainted with someone who has a developmental disability. You'll learn that they are Just Like You."

South Dakota's DD Network includes South Dakota Advocacy Services, the SD Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Center for Disabilities of Sanford School of Medicine at the University of South Dakota. For more information visit any of our websites – www.sdadvocacy.org; <http://www.usd.edu/cd/>; or <http://dhs.sd.gov/ddc> or call the SD Council on Developmental Disabilities at 1-800-265-9684; Center for Disabilities at 1-800-658-3080 or SD Advocacy Services at 1-800-658-4782.

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*Executive Proclamation
State of South Dakota
Office of the Governor*

Whereas, All citizens desire and deserve the opportunity to participate meaningfully in all aspects of their community, including their neighborhood, the workplace and the schools; and,

Whereas, Our communities can grow closer through education, awareness, and understanding, and benefit from recognizing not only each other's abilities, but our commonalities and differences; and,

Whereas, Our communities need to be made more aware of the capabilities of, and provide opportunities for, individuals with developmental disabilities to be part of their communities; and,

Whereas, It is in the public's interest to offer individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to make decisions for themselves and to live and work in our communities where they can exercise their full rights and responsibilities as citizens; and,

Whereas, Individuals with developmental disabilities deserve nothing less:

Now, Therefore, I, M. Michael Rounds, Governor of the state of South Dakota, do hereby proclaim March 2009 as

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

In South Dakota, and I urge all citizens to observe the month by participating in appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the state of South Dakota, in Pierre, the Capital City, **this Fifteenth Day of February in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Eight.**

M. Michael Rounds, Governor

Attest: Chris Nelson, Secretary of State of South Dakota